

SRI BULLETIN #3 – March 19, 2012

INFIELD FLY RULE

This week's bulletin is going to address an occasionally misunderstood part of the game. Some clarity concerning the infield fly rule... the rule not being in place would unfairly place base runners at risk in the infield fly situation, and is covered under NFHS 2-19-1 *"An infield fly is a fair fly ball (not including a line drive or an attempted bunt) which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort, when first and second, or first, second and third bases are occupied before two are out"*.

Stating the obvious:

- It must be a fair ball.
- There must be less than two outs.
- It can be caught by an infielder with "ordinary effort".
- It is only in effect when runners are on first and second or the bases are full.
- A line drive or bunt can never be an infield fly.
- It is not mandatory that it be caught in the infield or by an infielder.

Additions:

- The batter is out.
- The ball remains live and all runners may advance at their own risk unless interference occurs by the offense or a runner is hit by the ball. The runners may tag up and attempt to advance on any caught infield fly.
- **A runner struck with the ball is out unless he is touching the base.** (NOTE: This is the only time a runner is protected by remaining on the bag while being struck with a fair batted ball.) In this case, the ball is live if the nearest defensive player is in front of the base and dead if he is behind the base.

How it works:

When the infield fly rule situation presents itself, the umpires must signal each other. Look on page 57 of the Oregon Baseball Umpires Manual, at Play Pic A. Simply touch the bill of your cap with the index finger. For the rule to take effect, in the judgment of the umpires, a fly ball has to be hit that can be handled by an infielder with ordinary effort. To keep it simple, the defensive player must be able to "camp" himself under the ball in order to make the catch. There is no rush to make this call! A fly ball caught by the defender on the run is not an infield fly. An infielder or outfielder meeting these requirements can catch the ball in the outfield as well. Limitations such as the grass line or the baselines do not apply.

Tad's Tricky Trivia: A Presidential Quiz

What President was quoted saying: "I couldn't see well enough to play baseball when I was a boy, so they gave me a special job—they made me an umpire."

(see answer at end of bulletin)

INFIELD FLY RULE (continued)

When should the umpires make the call? If possible, as the ball begins to descend, or as soon after the ball reached its peak. If all conditions exist, the plate umpire should declare "Infield fly, the batter is out". If fair foul judgment comes into play, simply state, "Infield fly, batter is out if fair." If the ball lands uncaught in foul territory, it is a foul ball. If it is a foul ball that is caught, it is simply a catch of a foul ball.

The call can be made by any umpire, but as stated above, generally by the plate umpire. The base umpire should point up into the air. (Play Pic B)

Should the infield fly be intentionally dropped by the defense, it is still an infield fly. The ball remains live. Since the batter is already declared out on the infield fly, this rule takes precedence. To avoid confusion, the umpire at this time should loudly repeat the call, "infield fly" and the "batter is still out".

NOTE: If defensive interference should occur while the fielder is attempting to catch the ball, the ball is dead, the runner is declared out for interference and the batter is out on the infield fly.

Closing:

The objective of this rule is to prevent the defense from gaining an unwarranted double or triple play. The whole key to correctly calling the infield fly is awareness of the situation, and taking your time. Pause, read and react. Can this ball be caught with ordinary effort?

I hope this breaks down the infield fly rule in a manner that can be easily understood and administered properly.

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Tad's Tricky Trivia Answer: *Harry Truman (1945-1953)*